



HARTFORD COMMUNITIES  
THAT CARE, INC.

**2/22 Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee Public Hearing  
February 22, 2023**

Respectfully Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly **COMMITTEE ON FINANCE, REVENUE AND BONDING**. Co-Chairs Fonfara and Horn, Vice Chairs Miller and Moore and Ranking Members Martin and Cheeseman, My name is Andrew Woods and I serve as the CEO of Hartford Communities that Care, a nonprofit dedicated to creating a drug free and violence free environment for families to thrive.

National and state policy specialists see this year as a potential inflection point, a time when our society might finally take on our public health crisis of gun violence. Even the cynics acknowledge that 2023 appears to present a rare opportunity for sustaining the public investment required for effective gun violence intervention and prevention efforts. Indeed, the evidence demonstrates we know how to decrease these horrible tragedies.

Speaking for those who have spent decades countering community violence on the front line, it is clear that investment in prevention has always been insufficient and uncoordinated.

Now, however, nationally, statewide, and locally, we have evidence on approaches that save lives.

A pivot toward funding proven prevention practices is long overdue.

For this reason, I am in full support of [Proposed H.B. No. 5653](#), AN ACT ESTABLISHING AN EXCISE TAX ON AMMUNITION TO PROVIDE FUNDING FOR COMMUNITY GUN VIOLENCE AND INTERVENTION PROGRAM GRANTS.

Hartford Communities That Care led the efforts to establish Connecticut's first Hospital Linked Violence Intervention Program (HVIP) in 2004, and since then to build a statewide collaborative with dozens of partners and advocates seeking to enhance and sustain innovative programs in prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery.

However, when it comes to adequate and sustained funding to prevent and reduce violence in the State of Connecticut, our policy prowess doesn't match the levels of funding necessary to make a dent in community violence, especially after the pandemic.

For comparison: In 2022, the Governor of Connecticut allocated less than \$3 million – and in this year's budget another \$2.9 million is requested for violence prevention programs. According to the Giffords Law Center, the State of Massachusetts made an investment of \$45 million in 2022, while New York's governor secured \$227 million to address this issue. (Note: Connecticut has about one-fifth the population of NY; about one-half the population of Massachusetts.)

If Connecticut is to truly be a leader in community violence intervention and prevention, we must be more than a leader in position statements. Our state also must lead with actions such as this bill, which would increase – and diversify – the resources necessary for sustained efforts that save lives.

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